

## *Boswell Briefing...*

By Congressman Leonard Boswell

### **Our Youth Need a Voice**

The voice of Iowa's young people is both valuable and meaningful, though far too often not heard. It is extremely important for us to listen to these voices.

To help give Iowa's youth a better forum to discuss the issues they face and examine positive solutions, I have formed a Congressional Youth Council. It has allowed me to harness the energy and idealism of the young people of Iowa and bring additional insight into the unique problems and opportunities each community faces. This has been an invaluable resource for me. It has shaped my view of the needs and expectations of our youth. I have also learned the value of an adult taking time to just listen.

Recently, I held a Youth Council Meeting over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). As a result of these meetings, I gained a fuller understanding of the problems our youth face. Three messages came out of the meeting, which all parents and teachers should be aware.

Students want mentors. They want to feel like someone they can relate to understands their problems. They want to know there is an adult or peer that cares and will respect their particular circumstance.

Teens want character instruction. They want someone in their lives providing guidance when

making choices. They want help with the fundamentals of right and wrong. The students want to be held accountable for their actions. They want to feel responsible to younger students and the community in general.

Third, youths need something to do. They want after-school programs, Teen Centers, and a place to go.

These students know what is going on in our schools. They are aware of the violence and the drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse that takes place in our schools. They want positive alternatives.

Congress certainly does not have all the answers. It is my belief we are all responsible for caring for our youth. Our communities need to come together and guide our young people to become the citizens and leaders Iowa will look to in the future.

I strongly encourage any students who are interested in becoming a part of my Congressional Youth Council to contact my office toll-free at 1-888-432-1984.

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*If you have comments or are having difficulty with a federal agency call my office toll-free 1-888-432-1984.*

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